

Britain Will Investigate 'Privilege' of Tass, As Soviet Agency Escapes Action for Libel

CPYRGHT

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LONDON, Nov. 23—A British Government committee will be set up at once to study the question whether Tass, the Soviet news agency, or other such organizations, should continue to have immunity under British law. Legislation subsequently may be sought to remove that immunity.

Viscount Jowitt, the Lord Chancellor, announced the Government's intention in the House of Lords today after Lord Vansittart, former Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, had delivered a scalding denunciation of the Soviet Union, Tass and the London Communist paper, The Daily Worker.

Lord Vansittart called Tass "a nest of guttersnipes" and said that The Daily Worker had indulged in "exactly same sort of muck as Tass."

He charged the Soviet Government with "impudence" in obtaining immunity for Tass in the British courts from a libel suit, brought

by an exiled Czechoslovak scholar, Prof. Vladimir Krajina.

Lord Vansittart said Britain was "greatly indebted" to Dr. Krajina for information supplied during the war; but he had been accused by Tass of "foul and refuted crimes." Yet Dr. Krajina had been unable to obtain redress by libel action in the British courts.

Lord Jowitt explained that Tass had not received "diplomatic immunity" as suggested by Lord Vansittart, but "state privilege," to which it was entitled if it was, in fact, a department of the Soviet state.

"Nevertheless it should not be thought that the agency will be left to carry on scurrilous activities without any check," said Lord Jowitt, adding that the inter-government's departmental committee would inquire whether British law allowed wider immunity than was desirable or required by international law.